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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides a brief introduction to Hungarian arts and crafts. A discussion of the historical development and characteristics of Hungarian folk art supplies the background for a section in which regional styles of Hungarian folk art are described (Transdanubia, the Highlands of northern Hungary, Transylvania, and the Great Hungarian Plain.) Section four presents descriptions and illustrations of Hungarian folk art, including structures, furniture, carving, pottery, metalwork, leatherwork, folk costumes, and embroidery. The availability of Hungarian folk art collections in the Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) area is cited, and a selected bibliography is included. (JD)

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ED219348

HUNGARIAN ETHNIC HERITAGE STUDY
OF PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Educational Curriculum Kit 6

HUNGARIAN FOLK ARTS AND CRAFTS

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prepared by
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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

1981

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HUNGARIAN ETHNIC HERITAGE
STUDY OF PITTSBURGH

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INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian Ethnic Heritage Study of Pittsburgh is pleased to present a series of ten educational curriculum kits concerning the history, culture and current community life of Hungarians in Greater Pittsburgh.

The purpose of this series is to provide an easily understandable guide to the Hungarian ethnic community in Greater Pittsburgh. The ten curriculum kits can be read and understood by the interested student, teacher, and general reader. No special training in Hungarian studies is presumed.

The format of curriculum kits was chosen for several reasons. By treating specific topics separately, we wished to present to the reader, student and teacher a comprehensive view of a well-defined topic. For example, the reader interested in current ethnic life will find most of that information in kits 3 and 4, concerned with "Historic Hungarian Places" and "Hungarian Community Life," respectively. On the other hand, the historically-inclined reader will turn to kit 2, "Hungarian Immigrants in Greater Pittsburgh, 1880-1980." Another practical consideration was that teachers should be able to use each kit as a basic information source, reading material, and teaching guide on a specific topic. Those interested in several topics will probably review all kits and consult additional sources listed in each of them.

The titles of the ten curriculum kits are:

1. Children's Hungarian Heritage
2. Hungarian Immigrants in Greater Pittsburgh, 1880-1980
3. Guide to Historic Hungarian Places in Greater Pittsburgh
4. Hungarian Community Life in Greater Pittsburgh
5. Hungarian Folk Traditions Revisited
6. Hungarian Folk Arts and Crafts
7. Survey of Hungary: Past and Present
8. Hungarian Historical Sources and Collections in Greater Pittsburgh
9. Bibliographical Guide to Hungarian-American Sources
10. Teaching Guide for Hungarian Curriculum Kits.

These curriculum kits respond to the special need of the classroom teacher for relevant materials and a teaching

guide to Hungarian Ethnic studies. The first seven kits introduce selected subject areas, while kits 8-10 provide guidelines for research and teaching.

Another feature of our study is that it makes available an extraordinary amount of primary source material relating to the history of the Pittsburgh Hungarian community. In the course of our research, we have identified and evaluated historical resources preserved in 13 libraries, 25 church collections, and 24 organizational archives, amounting to a total of 62 separate documentary collections. All major holdings in each collection are identified, evaluated, and annotated for the benefit of the prospective student and scholar in kit 8. To illustrate the potential value of these resources, we have used them liberally in our narrative.

This publication is not intended as the final word on Hungarians in Pittsburgh, but the first major step leading to the discovery and better understanding of the Hungarian heritage. Our primary task was to prepare an inventory of documentary resources, to present selected aspects of the Hungarian heritage, and to design guidelines for classroom teaching. We hope that the results of our work will encourage students, teachers, and scholars to explore the Hungarian heritage. We welcome such explorations and are prepared to provide assistance if requested.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all persons and organizations who supported this undertaking. We acknowledge the financial assistance provided to us by the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program of the United States Department of Education, which made our study possible. We express our special thanks to the Pittsburgh Hungarian community, to all churches and synagogues, fraternal, social, and cultural organizations, as well as individuals who responded so generously to our requests. We wish to extend our appreciation to our Advisory Council, representing both Hungarian organizations and ethnic studies specialists. We appreciate also the support received from our organizational sponsor, the American Hungarian Educators Association. Finally, as project director I wish to take this opportunity to commend the outstanding cooperation, dedication, and sustained performance, often under trying circumstances, of all study participants, and especially of their families, whose patience, sacrifices, and sense of humor made the completion of this study possible.

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Preface

Domestic arts and crafts have enriched the life of the Hungarian people and continue to be an essential element of their culture. This booklet provides a brief introduction to this heritage through description as well as illustration. Its purpose is to outline the characteristics of Hungarian folk arts for the general reader. To satisfy advanced and specialized needs, a list of standard English-language studies on Hungarian folk art was included.

Hungarian folk art collections in the Pittsburgh area are listed in a special section.

The Hungarian Ethnic Heritage Study welcomes inquiries and is prepared to provide assistance to individuals and organizations.

1. Historical Development of Hungarian Folk Art

Around 896 A.D. when the Hungarians, or Magyars (as they called themselves), arrived on the site of their present homeland, the Carpathian Basin, they already had a distinctive ornamental art of their own. Archaeological finds from that period contain a number of decorated items: clothing, utensils, weapons, and jewelry. The motifs on these items differ from those found elsewhere in Europe. They reflect Magyar traditions which were shaped by centuries of contact with nomadic warrior peoples. More significantly, many of these motifs reflect the rituals and attitudes associated with shamanistic and animistic religions. We may see, for example, the simple, almost schematic depictions of natural phenomena: the sun, the moon, fire, water, as well as various animals.

During the Middle Ages, the Magyars adjusted to a European way of life. They became Christians, gave up their semi-nomadic way of life for one of agriculture, and created permanent settlements. Medieval European taste left its mark on the items made and used by the people during this period. This taste is characterized by, among other things, the geometric design and red-blue color combination of ornaments, the roughhewn construction of furniture pieces, and the increased use of homespun, handwoven textiles.

The Ottoman Empire held sway over much of Hungary for nearly a century and a half. Undeniably, the Turks destroyed

much of the accomplishments of Hungarian society and caused an irreparable delay in the country's historical progress. At the same time, their extended presence in the land also contributed to the enrichment of ornamentation. A specifically "Oriental" touch in some Hungarian embroidery and pottery items, for example, is traceable to Turkish influence.

The period of Renaissance was extremely important for Hungarian cultural and artistic development. Even though it coincided in part with the Turkish occupation, the Renaissance also witnessed the advent of book printing, humanist literature, and the first Bible translations into the Magyar language. The kings of the period were great builders; their palaces exhibit the talents of workmen and artists from many European countries. Among others, Italian, French, and German artists resided in Hungary, and their influence left a mark on native folk art. The etching of pottery items and the use of pomegranates, carnations,and lilies in folk design can be attributed to Renaissance influence.

The stylistic period of Baroque and Classicism also exerted some influence on Hungarian folk art, especially in furniture-making and the construction of houses. As a result of modernization and the rising standard of living, the number of furniture items increased, as did the frequency of ornamentation on peasants' houses. The carved gables, pillars, and beams of the houses, for example, reveal a definite Baroque or Classical influence.

The largest number of folk art items survived from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In designating this period as the "Golden Age" of Hungarian folk art, ethnographers also took into account several socio-historical factors. The increased demand for market production brought about a definite rise in the material well-being of the peasants. Combined with a certain degree of urbanization, the reduction of illiteracy, and increased mobility, the peasants' world of objects was enlarged. There was, for example, an increased use of imported textiles, factory-made yarns, silks, and brocades. Even the range of colors used in folk art was broadened. According to late nineteenth century research, there were between 200 and 1,200 tools and utensils, including almost 300 pieces of crockery, in a peasant household.

Perhaps even more important was the heightened con-

sciousness of the peasants' social position. The 1848 war of independence and the resulting laws guaranteeing and protecting their political rights certainly altered the mentality of the peasantry and awakened their pride. The nationalist struggle against foreign oppressors, and the Romantic-Populist movement in the arts and in literature resulted in the cultivation of a "Hungarian style," which took many of its elements from the lore and art of the common people. Folk songs and folk dances became popular entertainment even in the cities. The customs of simple people were being imitated and a surge of appreciation surrounded items of folk art. Ethnographic interest focused on the creativity of the people. The first books on the topic were published in the 1870s. The National Exhibition of 1885 revealed the richness of Hungary's native art to thousands of visitors.

Our century, with its high demand on time and the standardization of products, has proven to be less beneficial for the cultivation and development of folk art. As the old craftsmen die, the methods, motifs, and skills face the threat of oblivion. Many pieces of folk art tend to become museum items. For several reasons, nevertheless, a revival of interest is taking place in the folk arts both in Europe and America. People search for the authentic, original expressions represented in folk art.

2. Characteristics of Hungarian Folk Art

More often than not, we will not know the name of the person who created the piece of folk art before us. On the other hand, we will have some knowledge of the community in which the item was created. The community nature of folk art is highly relevant: the methods, motifs, even the techniques were based on communal tradition. Peasant societies and peasant taste are generally opposed to change, but we must not assume that folk art is merely the mechanical imitation of things from the past. Creative individuals were able to influence prevailing taste by introducing new, yet harmoniously fitting design elements and techniques into the richness of their crafts. Some of these new "styles" are known by the names of their originators.

For centuries, folk art was merely part of housework. Every peasant household produced all the items its members used. Naturally, crafts which required specialized equipment, such as kilns for pottery or tools for blacksmithing, separated from

this pattern quite early. Practitioners of such village "industries" invested more and more of their time and energy into developing their skills, passing them — and their equipment — on to their descendants. Until very recent times, however, the ownership of land remained quite important for these specialists.

We find folk art items to be objects for everyday use, or, in many instances, the "Sunday variants" of such objects. The shepherd's crook, for example, aids its owner in his work. It is thus selected for durability and ease of handling. The "working" crook is usually unadorned, but the shepherd will select a more attractive, smoother, straighter growth of wood for his "Sunday crook." After carefully choosing a pattern, he will patiently carve this design into the handle, or the entire length of the crook. This will not be a tool, but a symbol of his profession and rank. He will carry it when he goes before the authorities or when he visits his sweetheart.

A similar distinction exists in the case of the wooden paddle with which women beat textiles (a traditional method of laundering). The everyday version is a block of wood with a handle on it, while the "Sunday variant" is often ornately carved or painted, thus useless for actual work. If received from their sweethearts, girls will display these paddles in their homes.

Another general observation which can be made concerning folk art refers to the use of motifs with ritualistic implications. "Ritual" is not limited to a religious application. The word can be used in connection with any repeated, strongly formalized, ceremonious group activity which establishes, expresses, or strengthens social relationships between human beings. One immediately thinks of weddings or funerals, but "ritual" can also be applied to harvest festivals, pig-killings, or the construction of a house. The frequency and significance of rituals have characterized the life of preindustrial man, and many remnants of these are with us today.

Objects have an important role in rituals; thus it is not surprising that the decoration of objects has often adopted ritualistic motifs. We mentioned shamanistic motifs of early Hungarian folk art. Some of these motifs have not yet disappeared from practice. Examples are the "tree of life" or "world tree" used in embroidery, weaving, and carving, or the forces of nature — the sun, the moon, water, or fire — which

appear in many forms. On grave markers, the human soul is often depicted as a bird, while the theme of love may be alluded to by pictures of stags, colts, fruits, flowers, or birds. Nineteenth century romantic notions connected with legendary highwaymen and robbers **(betyár)** were also expressed in a similarly ritualistic manner.

Color symbolism is also an important element of Hungarian folk art. The most frequently used color is red. It symbolizes love, youth, blood, and struggle. Green stands for spring and the renewal of life; black for sadness, mourning, or wickedness. Heavy use of dark blue is restricted to the clothing of elderly women, while yellow and brown, considered the colors of withering and fall, are the least popular colors in the folk art of Hungary.

ETHNOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF HUNGARY

3. The Regional Styles of Hungarian Folk Art

Before discussing the four major regions inhabited by Hungarians, we must remember that some of these regions extend outside the present political borders. Close to three million Magyar-speaking people live in the five nations surrounding Hungary. Against considerable odds, they strive to retain the use of their language, their customs, and their art. On the other hand, it should also be pointed out that within the borders of historical (pre-1920) Hungary, distinctly different peoples -- Magyars, Croatians, Germans, Rumanians,

Serbs, and Slovaks, among others — lived in close proximity for centuries. This makes it difficult to determine the origin of some folk motifs with total certainty. In Central Europe interethnic influence must be accepted as a historical fact.

Transdanubia

This densely populated region of varying landscape stretches westward from the Danube River to the Austrian border. Its soil and climatic conditions are favorable to agriculture. Its location, close to the Central European market centers and accessible by water routes, promoted its participation in trade. Thus, the region became comparatively prosperous. Its natural beauty stimulated the materials and motifs of the folk arts.

Illustration 1. Cifraszűr with Woolen Embroidery, Great Hungarian Plain
Illustration 2. Shepherd smoking a Pipe and Wearing Cifraszűr

Several features of Hungarian folk art originate from Transdanubia. For example, the colorfully embroidered long friezecoat **(cifraszűr)** first appeared in the western counties during the early part of the nineteenth century. Within 20-30 years the fad swept the entire country; it went through several stylistic changes regionally and ended up in a black-and-white version in easternmost Transylvania. The carving technique of "Spanish waxing" also originated from Transdan-

ubia: this method requires the deep etching of a design into the material — mostly wood or gourd — and the filling of the holes with colored sealing wax.

Pottery is one of the most diversified media of Transdanubian folk art. The earthenware varies in design, form, and technique. The basic color can be white, terracotta, medium green, or even black. The finish can be highly glazed or matte, and the vessel may be left unadorned or highly decorated with floral or geometric design.

The herdsmen of Transdanubia cultivated the art of carving to a high degree. Their techniques are "scratching," "relief carving," "inlay" (using lead, tin, copper), as well as the "Spanish wax" method mentioned above.

Transdanubian fiber arts are justifiably famous, especially those of the Sárköz region along the southern banks of the Danube. Due to the richness of the soil, the Sárköz villages became relatively wealthy and they expressed their pride through decorative art. The homespun bed-linen, tablecloths, and towels of the district used to be plain white until the last century. The new homespun employs the color schemes of red and black, white and red, or black and white in their geometric design, which often covers the entire surface of the woven material. Using their homespun, as well as expensive imported yardage and gold trimming, they also produce beautiful embroidery. According to some ethnographers, the people of Sárköz went farthest in exploring the possibilities of peasant style costume design. The bright-colored shiny pottery of the region, made especially for these villages in the nearby towns of Szekszárd and Baja, also contribute to the charm of the Sárköz region.

The Highlands of Northern Hungary (Felvidék or Felföld)

This large, partly mountainous region occupies the northern edge of present-day Hungary and reaches into the Soviet Union and into Czechoslovakia. Magyars, Slovaks, and Carpatho-Ruthenians co-inhabited this region for nearly a thousand years. Their folk art developed in a parallel fashion, frequently borrowing from each other. The relative poverty of the Highlands also resulted in the fact that most of the traditional patterns were preserved without much alteration.

Since animal herding was an important mode of livelihood in this region, the arts and crafts of herdsmen were well

developed. Among the carved pieces of the Highlands, the typical wooden drinking cup **(csanak)**, often carved into the shape of human or animal figures, is perhaps best known. Religious motifs are frequently carved into wood or stone, since the area is largely Roman Catholic. The simple geometric designs of local weaving follow the color schemes of red-white-blue or red-white-black. Taking advantage of the considerable mineral resources, the mountain villagers became known for their skill in metal-working.They have traditionally supplied wrought-iron ornamental or utilitarian items for other regions of Hungary.

The town of Mezőkövesd is the center of the so-called **Matyó** region. Its beautiful decorative art became world famous and is often considered as **the** typical Hungarian folk art. The 20,000 Roman Catholic Matyos fairly over-populate the poor district. Traditionally most of the men hired themselves out as migrant laborers all over Hungary. Until the 1860's the clothing of the Matyó remained simple and reserved; their embroidery used only the colors red and blue. From the seventies on, however, Mezőkövesd became the leading inspiration of peasant style for Hungarians everywhere. The clothes for example, rioted with colors, including even items which men wore. (The shirts featured sleeves nearly a yard wide; they were heavily embroidered and edged with lace. The young man wore this on his wedding day, and when he was buried, his shroud was made out of the sleeves.) All previous traditions of composition were abandoned; there was a tendency to cover the entire surface of the material with rhythmically recurring flower motifs. The embroiderers tried to outdo each other by adding new patterns to their treasury of designs each year. Furniture pieces, ordered from the craftsmen of the nearby Eger, were also painted bright red with intricate flower patterns. The Matyó houses were also decorated with dozens of brilliant plates supplied by the Tiszafüred potters.

Mezőkövesd was also the scene of an interesting episode in the history of Hungarian folk art. By 1924, the town elders had decided that the church-going clothes of the villagers had become too luxurious, and they prevailed upon the local pastor to ban gold lace and gold embroidery from the church. The girls and women of Mezokovesd then burned all the finery in front of the church The luxurious use of colors, however, remained a common practice.

The Great Hungarian Plain (Alföld or Nagyalföld)

This large, almost completely flat region is located in the middle of the Carpathian Basin, along the left bank of the Danube and on both sides of the Tisza River. It was traditionally considered the heartland of the Hungarian language area. During the 200-year long Turkish wars, however, the Hungarian population of the Plain was thinned out and replaced, partly through administrative settlement and partly through spontaneos migration, by Serbs, Rumanians, and Germans. After two centuries of coexistence, many of the nationalities became Magyarized; yet, there was enough dissatisfaction among them, that the southern and eastern parts of the Great Plain were attached to the kingdoms of Rumania and Yugoslavia at the end of the First World War.

The wealthy agrarian market towns played an important part in the development of folk art. On the Plain, they determined the taste of the surrounding villages and supported large artisan populations. One example is Hodmezovasarhely, where at the turn of the century more than four hundred potters worked. Another notable characteristic of the region is that, even though there was a sharp social division between peasant and noblemen, several elements of decorative art were shared by the two classes, and many of the crafts were pursued by noblemen as well as commoners. In contrast with other regions of Hungary, the relative poverty of the Alfold prevented a great "second flowering" of folk art around the end of the last century.

The Plain Herdsmen also cultivated a lively and expressive decorative art, but instead of wood, which was scarce, their raw material tended to be the horns and bones of animals, and leather, which they utilized for a wide variety of purposes. The embroidered or appliqued frieze-coat **(szűr)** enjoyed great popularity in this region, and some of the best **szur**-tailors worked in the Alfold towns.

The region of Kalocsa, along the southern banks of the Danube, became one of the best-known centers of Hungarian folk art, the more so because it is presently producing exportable decorative items. The costumes of women are covered with embroidered flowers, using as many as 27 colors in one design, which are pre-drawn free-hand by the talented "writing women" of Kalocsa. The highly stylized patterns are made up of daisies, marigolds, lilies, cornflowers,

poppies, and lilies-of-the-valley. The same designs appear on the painted furniture and pottery items of the region. But the most striking appearance of Kalocsa folk art can be found in the houses: the white-washed walls are covered from floor to ceiling with the same floral motifs, painted there by the "writing women" without even first outlining the design. The genre is suitable for interior decoration, and Kalocsa-patterned wallpaper is now manufactured for commercial use.

Transylvania (Erdély; in German, Siebenbürgen; in Rumanian, Ardel)

This is the easternmost region of the Hungarian language area. Its settlement by the Magyars was completed by the thirteenth century, at about the same time when Rumanians began to appear there in large numbers. After the Turkish conquest of Hungary (1526), Transylvania existed as an independent principality for about 150 years. The nearly constant warfare decimated the Hungarians residing in the valleys and plateaus, while the mountain-dwelling Rumanians multiplied. Based on this imbalance of population, the 1920 Treaty of Trianon attached Transylvania, together with a sizeable portion of eastern Hungary to Rumania. The more than two million Transylvanian Hungarians continue to reside in compact Magyar-speaking regions and are resisting attempts at Rumanization.

Hungarian, Rumanian, and German (Saxon) folk art developed side by side in Transylvania, the landlocked isolated nature of the region also resulted in the preservation of traditional patterns and methods. In contrast with other Hungarian regions, for example, the women continued the wearing of a single long skirt, instead of the shorter version worn over a number of underskirts. The variety and multitude of warm outer garments is the result of the severe climate. An unusual feature of the Transylvanian outerwear is that items for women and men are often identical in tailoring, color, and ornamentation, while the age of the owner is distinctly illustrated by the use of various colors.

Transylvanian carving is not limited to herdsmen. In this region the decorative use of wood is widespread and the art of woodworking is very highly developed.

In discussing the folk art of Transylvania, it is impossible not to mention the Kalotaszeg district, consisting of some 45 villages near the city of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca). The de-

corative art of this ancient Magyar region is so rich that it came to represent Hungarian folk art in Hungary and abroad. The "discovery" of native art around the end of the nineteenth century is said to have taken place here. During the early decades of this century, Kalotaszeg was even influential in the development of modern art and architecture. Carving, weaving, and the making of painted furniture contribute significantly to the richness of local art, but it is the embroidery on the homespun yellow linen of the district which made Kalotaszeg internationally famous. A great variety of techniques and stitches is used, outstanding among them the square chain-stitch (**irásos** embroidery). Its graceful linear design depicting floral patterns is applied to pillows, tablecloths, wallhangings, and articles of clothing. The Kalotaszeg costume is characterized by the long skirt, large ornamental aprons, boots, and the **párta**, a stiff crescent-shaped headgear, often decorated with pearls and golden thread, which is the indicator of unmarried status among women.

4. Forms of Hungarian Folk Art

Since this booklet provides only a brief glimpse into the world of Hungarian folk art, it cannot treat all of its products. A more exhaustive survey would have to include, for example, weaving, lacemaking, the carving of molds for ginger-bread, basket weaving, stone carving, the block printing of textiles, and the making of luxuriously stitched boots. This discussion will be limited to the most significant forms of Hungarian folk art.

Structures, Gates, and Towers

The rural houses of Hungary have traditionally been single-floor structures with few rooms. Building materials varied from region to region: wood in the forested northeast and in Transylvania, a clay-based substance on the Great Plain, stone or brick much less frequently and only in recent times. Wooden shingles or reed-straw thatching covered the roofs. The exposed beams, and especially the main beam (**mestergerenda**) were often decorated with carved or painted designs. The almost puritanical simplicity of the houses was relieved only by a few decorative elements. Among these we may mention the carved gables and Classicist porch columns of some regions. The windows, particularly those facing the street were also often beautified with fancy shutters, carved

or wrought iron grillings, woven or lace curtains, and, of course, flower planters.

The peasant courtyard was usually fenced in and provided with a gate. In eastern Hungary, and especially in Transylvania, peasants proclaimed their wealth and skill by constructing intricately carved, and sometimes painted, covered gates. These are the famous Székely gates **(Székelykapu)**.

It was desirable for each community to have a tower. These usually housed the church bells, but they were also used for other purposes, such as watchtowers to warn of fire or enemy attack. Building the towers by using communal labor was a widespread practice. In such an instance, professional builders were used only for the more exacting and difficult tasks of construction. The oldest surviving such tower is from the sixteenth century, but documents indicate that the building of these was frequent in the fourteenth century. The use of wood was quite practical for the construction of the tall, slim structures with peaked roofs, which bear strong signs of Gothic influence. It is, therefore, not surprising that the largest number of such early towers can be found in the northern and eastern regions of Hungary, as these are forested areas. Wood, of course, was an important element in the churches and towers of other regions as well. Its use in the roof structures and in the decoration was almost exclusive.

Furniture

Furniture-making among Hungarian peasants progressed significantly from the time when a stump served as a chair and any raised surface as a sleeping place. Stools and tables may have been the first "manufactured"items of furniture, followed by beds and storage places. Among the latter, the various chests have prevailed to the present time. One version became the characteristic piece of Hungarian folk furniture: the ornamental container for the clothing of the bride-to-be, called the **tulipános láda** (tulip chest), on account of the floral motifs carved or painted on it.

Wall cabinets, cupboards, cradles, and arm-chairs are other characteristic items made by peasant craftsmen. Among the traditional furniture-producing centers, Komarom and Miskolc, became widely known for the heavy and gaudy bridal chests, Hodmezovasarhely for entire "living-room sets" painted fiery red on a dark blue background, the Transdanubian towns of Pápa and Veszprém for their carved-back chairs, and the

Transylvania region for beautifully painted cupboards.

Carving

Traditionally pursued by men, carving is one of the few media of Hungarian folk art in which the artist's name is often known, since it is frequently incorporated into the design or otherwise made prominent. Obviously, wood (walnut, pear, plum, cherry, birch, poplar, or willow) was the most popular material, but in regions where wood was scarce, the bones and horns of animals were also used.

Among the larger pieces of carving, we might mention gateposts, porch pillars, gables, wooden locks, gratings, doors, and, of course, the various pieces of furniture. There were also many smaller carved items: dishes, utensils, yoke pins, tools for spinning and weaving, hoe scrapers, razor-, salt- and mirror-cases, saddles, gingerbread molds, flutes, and block patterns for the dyeing of cloth.

The most frequently used methods were chip-carving, relief carving, surface scratching, and inlaying with wax, paint or metals. Certain items, such as doors and the backs of chairs,

Illustration 3. Wooden Carved Drinking Cup (csanak) Miskolc Region, Northern Highlands.

Illustration 4. Matyó Young Men and Embroidery Pattern from their Aprons.

exhibit the technique of latticework or openwork carving. Examples of burning the pattern into the wood can also be found. Except for the makers of wooden canteens **(csutora)**, lathework did not become widely used among Hungarians.

As in most other media of Hungarian folk art, geometric designs predominate in carving. Other frequently used motifs

are: flowers, plants, animals, Baroque patterns, written texts, and human figures.

Carving has traditionally been the strongest manifestation of herdsmen's art **(pásztormüvészet)**. Time being one of the plentiful elements of their profession, herders of sheep, cattle, swine and horses had long ago developed many creative skills, among them that of carving painstaking designs into any material coming their way. Even though much of Hungary's animal herding has been thoroughly modernized, carving as a popular art form has managed to survive to a surprising degree.

Some of the items carved by the herdsmen were for ceremonial or gift purposes. Among these, the fancy crooks, hatchets, and mirror-frames may come to mind. Other items were for everyday use: drinking cups, matchboxes, eating utensils, and containers.

One interesting application of carving skills is in the making of wooden grave markers. Since most of the older pieces — the oldest one from the eighteenth century —were found in Calvinist, Lutheran, or Unitarian cemeteries, their use may have special meaning as a sign of distinction from the crosses found over Catholic graves. Although some of the grave markers were painted brown, blue, green, or black (with the color white used for the graves of children), their main decorative element was carving. The patterns may have ranged from the roughly hewn to the most intricately scrolled designs.

The earliest grave markers may have been a semifinished beam, on which a geometric pattern was engraved with an axe. The later column type markers bear much finer patterns, the work of chisels, knives and saws. Portions of this type of marker may be rounded off with a lathe. The board type marker often had an engraved text on it, and it was decorated with scrollwork. The decoration of grave markers in many cases makes reference to the age, sex, and social standing of the deceased.

Pottery

Until very recent times, the making of vessels from clay was widely practiced in all parts of the Hungarian language area. Although some ethnographers proposed that the Hungarians learned this craft from their Slavic neighbors and co-inhabitants, it seems more likely that they became acquainted with it

before their arrival in the Carpathian Basin, i.e. during their migration. Nonetheless, the presence of Slavic, Turkic, and even West European influences in Hungarian pottery is evident.

Clay was plentiful in every region of Hungary, and the other ingredients and tools were also easily obtainable. At the same time, there was a steadily increasing demand for containers and utensils. Consequently, pottery flourished, and by the sixteenth century it was valued not only for its utilitarian but for its decorative possibilities. The earliest potters' guilds were formed in 1512, and by the time of the 1890 census there were over 7,000 potters in Hungary.

The great number of shops in the disparate localities of the country resulted in considerable variety in shape, design, and ornamentation. We can only present some of the more characteristic shapes of Hungarian pottery, among them the unique Miska jug, which, in the nineteenth century, became the specialty of the Great Plain potters in the region of Mezocsat.

Metalwork

In their pre-Conquest migration, the Hungarians may have learned about working with metals from the peoples of Asia, who were known for their skills in this craft. At the time of their entry into the Carpathian Basin, they already used a great number of metal items. Most of their weapons were made of metal, as were their buckles, clasps, bells, tools, bridlery, and their jewelry. After Christianization and the adoption of agriculture, more and more tools were needed, and the constant warfare of the late Middle Ages also demanded the production of many weapons. In the villages the local smith made wheel rims, locks, window grills, doorknobs, cooking utensils, and andirons. In some regions, the use of iron grave markers also came into practice. Even the self-sufficient herdsmen turned to the smith for certain items: the hatchets of the swineherds and, in some instances, the crooks of the shepherds were examples of ornamental forging. Jewelry-making was generally cultivated in the cities, but village tinkers often produced a few items for their own use or as gifts. As a curiosity item, we might mention the "Easter eggs with horseshoes and spurs." These had no practical use; they were made by smiths to demonstrate their skill and were usually gifts or souvenirs.

Leatherwork

If we consider the climate the Hungarians lived in before they arrived in the Carpathian Basin, or the fact that they were traditionally herders of animals, then it is not surprising that the use of leather had long been cultivated by them. The Turkic peoples, with whom they had extensive contact, were well known for their leatherworking skills. Since many of the Hungarian words related to this craft are clearly Turkish borrowings, it is fair to assume that some transfer of knowledge took place. During the Middle Ages, Hungarian saddlery was famous all over Europe.

At one time, much of the Hungarians' wardrobe might have been made out of animal hides, but in more recent times the use of leather became restricted to outerwear. The **suba,** a full-length fur cape, the **bekecs,** a hip-length formfitting coat, and the **ködmön,** a shorter jacket, are still made, often with heavy embroidery. Other leather-craft items are: belts, straps, knife sheaths, pouches, and satchels — mostly items popular among herdsmen. Hungarian saddles are still internationally famous. Once a popular folk instrument, the **duda,** quite

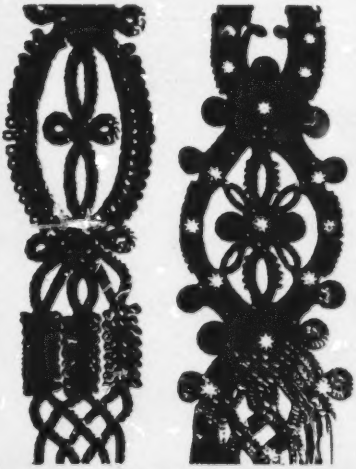


Illustration 5. Braided Leather Trappings from Ornamental Harness, Great Plain

Illustration 6.
Writing woman of Kalocsa.

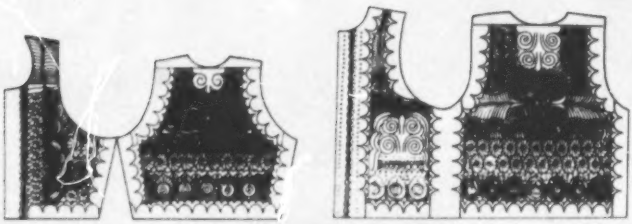


Illustration 7. Patterns for Man's and Woman's Embroidered Vest Kalotaszeg Region, Transylvania.

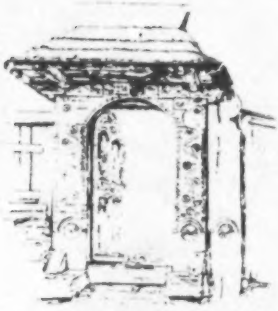
Illustration 8. Peasant houses in Pusztafalu, Abauj County.

similar to the bagpipe, was also made of leather. A characteristic item of herdsmen, and popular souvenir for tourists, is the long leather whip **(karikásostor).**

Folk Costumes

In Hungarian rural society, clothing traditionally made a strong reference to the wearer's position in the community, his or her age, rank, and wealth. Items of clothing are also one of the most obvious examples of the "Sunday variant" theory of folk art. Work clothes are simple and utilitarian. Only those of young women are occasionally brightened by a colorful scarf or a similar item. For Sundays or holidays, however, entire villages seem to blossom as they don their colorful costumes. The contrast is usually most pronounced in women's clothes. Men's wear tends to be more somber, with dark colors predominating. (There are important exceptions, such as in the **Matyó** region, where young men dress just as colorfully as girls.)

The unifying principle of women's clothes in the various regions of Hungary is that they consist of two separate units: the bodice and the lower part, each of the two, of course,



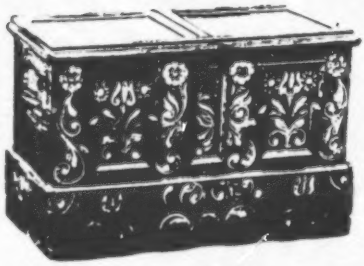


Illustration 9. Decorative Gate (Szekelykapu), Transylvania.

Illustration 10. Carved Chest with Yellow, Green and Red Design on a Dark Brown Base. Miskolc, Northern Highlands.

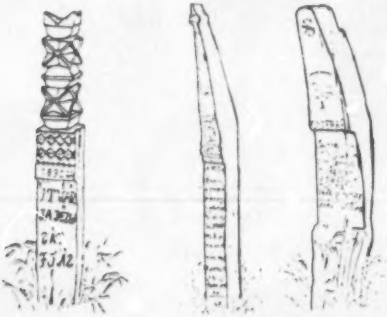


Illustration 11. Carved Grave Markers from Transylvania.

Illustration 12. "Miska" Wine Jug, Lead-Glazed Pottery Made in 1848 in Mezőcsat, Great Plain.

having several layers. The costumes are then completed by a wide variety of headgear and footwear. The basic item of dress is the loose-fitting linen shift with long or short sleeves, over which is worn a vest, a short jacket, or a sheepskin cape. The lower part of the costume consists of a loose-fitting petticoat or underskirt, skirt, and apron. The length and tailoring of the skirt, the number and material of the petticoats very greatly from region to region.

With advancing age, women wear increasingly plainer clothes; the favorite color of youth, red, is slowly replaced by green, blue, and finally black. In some regions, the ancient

custom of white mourning is retained.

Men's clothes vary less from one region to another, although there are some characteristic items for each locality. This may be due to the fact that men tend to wear more store-bought clothes than women. The basic item of men's wear was, however, traditionally homemade: it is the **gatya**, the wide-legged linen or woolen pantaloons, which may serve as outer- or underwear, depending on the weather. In our century, of course, this item has been replaced by factory made black, blue, or gray trousers, worn with tight-fitting boots. Over the linen shirt, a waist-length vest, the **dolmány** is worn.

Illustration 13.
Pendant Made from an 1894 U.S. Dollar.

Illustration 14.
Woman's Short Jacket, the ködmön.

Illustration 15. Young married Woman, Esztergom County, left, and Unmarried Girl, Nógrád County, right.

Illustration 16. Szűr and Szuba, Nagykunság Region, the Great Plain. Herdsman (csikós) on left wears the Peasants' Pantaloons, the gatya.

Illustration 17. 18th Century Pattern from the Rábaköz Region, Transdanubia.

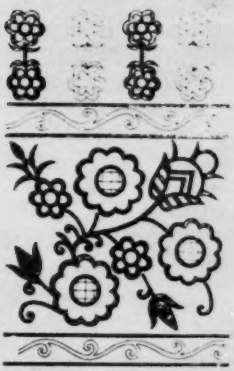


Illustration 18. Embroidery for Edging Pillowcases Csenger, Szabolcs-Szatmár County.

Illustration 19. Chain-Stitching from Udvarhely, Transylvania.

Illustration 20. Male folk costume vests (dolmány), in the DUTIFA collection.

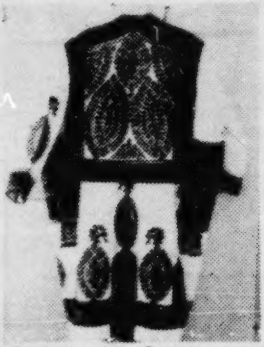


Illustration 21 "Szur," representative of the Kalotaszeg region in Transylvania.

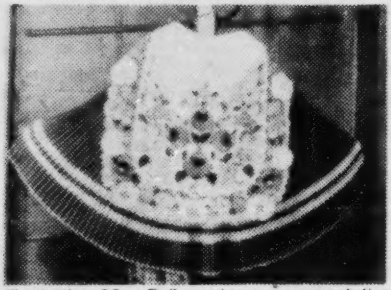


Illustration 22. Folk costume representative of the Kalocsa region.

Two characteristic items of peasant outerwear must be mentioned. One of them is the **suba,** the sleeveless sheepskin cloak, worn most of the time with the furry side turned outward. It is decorated with applique work of colored leather, or with embroidery in silk or wool. Since a **suba** is made out of as many as twenty sheepskins, it is usually possessed by the head of a family or a wealthy peasant.

The **szűr** is perhaps the best known item of Hungarian folk wear. It is a long coat made out of heavy woolen frieze material and embroidered or appliqued. The embroidered version **(cifraszűr)** is intended for festive occasions and is the coveted object for every boy approaching adulthood. In the Great Plain region, both the **suba** and the **szűr** remained in common use until very recently, especially among the herdsmen, who spend much of their time in the open air.

Traditionally, an important part of a girl's dowry was the **kelengye**, which consisted mainly of textile items to be worn or used around the house. Families began to assemble this trousseau soon after the girls' birth, in order to marry her in a "respectable" manner. Sometimes containing 200-300 pieces (shifts, aprons, sheets, pillowcases, tablecloths, and the like), the **kelengye** ideally sufficed for the life of a couple, and some items were passed on for several generations. The assembly of such a trousseau often meant a sizeable investment in time, labor, and money. This expensive custom may have contributed to the origin of the peasant saying: "Each time you have a daughter, it is like having your house burn down."

Embroidery

According to some ethnographers, embroidery may have its origin in the sewing together of various pieces of clothing. The simple stitching was made fancy and ornamental to better cover the seams. Whether this theory is valid or not, embroidery is perhaps the most "alive" medium of folk art in Hungary. The large-scale discontinuation of peasant lifestyle did not bring about its demise. Some fine pieces of embroidery have been produced by urban practitioners of this craft. Even modern elements of design have found their way into the traditional patterns, thus enriching its variety.

Great versatility is characteristic of Hungarian embroidery. Variants of it may be classified according to the base material (textiles, leather, or thick felt), according to the colors used

(white-on-white or colors), or according to the many techniques utilized. One may embroider following a pre-drawn design or one may use the "counted thread" technique.

A great number of embroidery pieces survived from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The motifs used on them — carnations, pomegranates, tulips, symmetrical vines or flowers sprouting from a vase, or pairs of birds — all indicate a strong Renaissance influence. These designs (**Urihimzés**) were often executed in one color, mostly in red, using home-dayed woolen yarns.

In contrast to these historical embroideries, the more recent styles, developed during the last century, are infinitely more diverse in their patterns. The new styles are characterized by a more crowded canvas, an equal emphasis on every element of the design, and by a taste for many colors. Also, to the great displeasure of purists, the new style was heavily influenced by factory-made textiles reflecting urban as well as rural taste.

5. Hungarian Folk Art in Pittsburgh

Hungarians who migrated to America brought with them examples of their native folk art. Photographs of early immigrants frequently show the arrivals in their native dress. Many households preserved other household items of artistic quality. But industrial work and the availability of factory-produced goods discouraged them from spending their time in the creation of homemade decorative items. In recent years, however, there have been encouraging signs that folk art is gaining renewed popularity.

The Pittsburgh region is fortunate to have several collections of Hungarian folk art.

Probably the best folk art collection can be found in the Duquesne University Tamburitzans Institute of Folk Arts. The collection includes four musical instruments used by Hungarian folk music ensembles: a hurdy-gurdy **(nyerere)**, a cither, a shepherd's pipe, and a cimbalom. Also included are a Palóc-style wooden chest, more than a dozen handwoven and embroidered textiles, leatherwork, folk-crafted pottery, and six folk costumes representative of several regional traditions. In addition, there is a good collection of English-language works on Hungarian folk arts, including the book, **Folk Arts of Hungary**, published by DUTIFA in 1981. Anyone

interested in Hungarian folk arts is encouraged to visit this collection.

The Hungarian Nationality Room in the University of Pittsburgh Cathedral of Learning displays fine examples of wood

Illustration 23. A recent display booth of the Hungarian Ethnic Group of Western Pennsylvania at the Pittsburgh Folk Festival.

Illustration 24. Tulip design used in the Hungarian Nationality Room. Cathedral of Learning.

carving and furniture based on folk motives. There are also several handcrafted folk art items. The most interesting of these are a Matyó-style tablecloth, a black Matyó-style doily, a Transylvanian lace piece, and a headpiece from the Matyó region. Some of the carved and painted designs of the Hungarian Room also exemplify Hungarian folk art motifs.

The Hungarian Ethnic Group of Western Pennsylvania also maintains several folk art items and exhibits them on special occasions. One item is the model of a peasant oven (kemence), usually displayed at the Pittsburgh Folk Festival. There is also a good collection of folk costumes, representing the Kalocsa, Rábaköz, Szatmár and Bukyák regions.

Another good Hungarian collection is displayed in the Byzantine Rite Catholic Archdiocesan Museum. Four rooms of the museum display folk arts and historical documents of Carpatho-Ruthenia, including numerous items of Hungarian folk art. A fifth room was recently established by Monsignor Basil Shereghy, director of the museum and pastor of Transfiguration of Our Lord Byzantine Rite Hungarian Catholic Church in McKeesport. This room will be devoted to Hungarian folk arts and documents. Items being displayed include textile handicrafts, chinaware, and woodcarving. Monsignor Shereghy will be pleased to provide further information. He

can be contacted at the telephone number 412-672-0728.

Penn View Arts Center in Elizabeth is also an important center of Hungarian folk arts. It provides an opportunity to obtain practical arts instruction and studio experience. Sister Edith Nemeth, its director, is of Hungarian descent and utilizes Hungarian design elements in her work in the fields of weaving, embroidery, lacemaking and pottery. The Center is an excellent small museum of Hungarian arts and crafts.

PENN VIEW ART CENTER

999 Rock Run Road
Elizabeth, Pennsylvania 15037
Phone: (412) 751-7821

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HUNGARIAN ETHNIC HERITAGE STUDY OF PITTSBURGH

The Hungarian Ethnic Heritage Study of Pittsburgh has published ten curriculum kits that present aspects of the Hungarian ethnic heritage in Greater Pittsburgh. Following are the curriculum kits that have been published:

1. Children's Hungarian Heritage
2. Hungarian Immigrants in Greater Pittsburgh, 1880–1980
3. Guide to Historic Hungarian Places in Greater Pittsburgh
4. Hungarian Community Life in Greater Pittsburgh
5. Hungarian Folk Traditions Revisited
6. Hungarian Folk Arts and Crafts
7. Survey of Hungary: Past and Present
8. Hungarian Historical Sources and Collections in Greater Pittsburgh
9. Bibliographical Guide to Hungarian-American Sources
10. Teaching Guide for Hungarian Curriculum Kits

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